
Hamza Ladjroud¹Faculty of Letters and Languages
Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-Ouzou, Algeria**CAPTURED BY RELIGIOUS TEXTS: THE JEW AS A CHILD IN *THE MERCHANT OF VENICE* AND *THE JEW OF MALTA*****Abstract**

This paper endeavors to revisit William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* and Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* in order to cast more light upon the portrayal of the Jewish characters in both plays. The study intends to re-examine the image of the Jew as a devil-incarnate, capable of all evil deeds such as usury, murder, and treachery. These stereotypes are looked at from a religious perspective, which most probably affords some explanations to whether those images should forever be considered invalid stereotypes, or they are mere manifestations of the commandments of a religious text that a Jew feels most obligated to obey. It's therefore our intention to analyze the Jewish characters' discourse in relation to the biblical theme of the Jew as a child of God. In so doing, we are likely to reconstruct the image of the Jew from a religious textual background, whose imagination is quixotically captured in the scriptures of the *Old Testament* and *Rabbinic Literature*. The article offers an analysis of mainly Shylock's and Barabbas' rhetoric in accord with theories of captivity as developed and implemented by Garry Ebersole in his authoritative book *Captured by Texts: Puritain to Post-modern images of Indian Captivity* in an attempt to unearth the ideological roots of Shylock's as well as Barabbas' religious discourse of separatism and overweening opinion of the Devine Preference of Jews over anything non-Jew. Moreover, this type of analysis invites us to approach the bearings of this form of captivity in the light of Freud's theory of Jewishness and Totemism, which eventually supports our hypothesis that Shylock and Barabbas were acting and reacting to circumstances on ideological basis; and that their discourse is less likely to have been the result of the aforementioned stereotypes, which were promulgated during the Elizabethan era.

Keywords: Captivity, Ideology, Jews, Judaism, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Totemism.

1. Introduction

The thirteenth-century Turkish satirist, Mullah Nasruddin Hodja, is reported to have had a Jewish neighbour named Aslan. The latter was keenly aware of the financial difficulties that Nasruddin was grappling with. One day, he reached to his neighbor offering to buy the dilapidated house where Nasruddin was dwelling, and hence attend to a neighbor in distress. The afflicted neighbor rejoiced at hearing such an offer, albeit for a pitiful price, he agreed to sell the house on one condition: he would keep ownership of a nail still sticking out in the living room and do whatever he wants with it. Despite the triviality of Nasruddin's request, Aslan could not help but agree to include his neighbor's condition as a clause in the house purchase contract. One month later, the wretched man appeared again at Aslan's new house to worship the abandoned nail. Though the time was rather inconvenient, Aslan had no right to object as long as Nasruddin had not violated the clause in the contract. Moreover, Aslan believed that the Mullah's sentimental memories of his father would soon phase themselves out and he might break himself of such disconcerting behavior. To everyone's surprise the Mullah's religious zeal grew even more enthusiastic that he devoted all his time to worshipping the nail. With such an albatross around Aslan's neck, the pathetic neighbor had

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no actual authority over whatever is affixed to the nail. However, the straw that broke the camel's back was when the Mullah started leaving his clothes on the nail and even his goat had a share of it. In the end, Aslan decided to bring his case to the assembly of village elders. After long discussions, the village leaders' verdict was in favor of Nasruddin since he had an article in the contract, which endowed him with the right to do whatever he wanted with the nail. Hopeless as he was, the Jewish neighbor decided to sell the house back to the Mullah at a fraction of the sale price.

This folkloric masterpiece has been retold for many generations in the past, and will live affectionately in the hearts and minds of many more generations to come. The credit for its survival in the collective memory of many people should go to the antagonist Jew in the story, who is essentially depicted as mischievous, untrustworthy and selfish countrymen. The second reason perhaps lies in the ability of the Oriental/Western protagonist to deftly decipher the cunning plots of the Jew and turn them against him in an attempt not only to save his house and family, but to appease the collective memory of one's race or ethnic group that no matter how smart Jews can be, there will always be a way to outsmart them. Thus, the moral duty of the narrative succeeds in reproducing the stereotypical Jew, yet it comes to naught when the Jew is depicted behaving in like manner without giving a plausible account for his wrongdoings: there is actually nothing Jew about evil; it is a neutral human trait that can be attributed to whoever commits it, regardless of their race, ethnicity or religious affiliation. The conundrum occurs when the reader is presented with a set of portrayals about the Jewish characters in the plays, without providing any account for why would these characters choose usury over many other profitable professions; or act revengefully instead of showing mercy toward their countrymen. This paper aims to provide an explanation to some of these Jewish wrongdoings from a religious perspective by trying to excavate the biblical texts informing the actions and reactions of the main Jewish characters in both plays.

Shakespeare's Shylock, for instance, though depicted as cunningly smart, was captured within the same narrative tradition that informed Nasruddin's tale. The play's third scene elaborates in great detail the repercussions of the potential encounter of Jewish villainy with Christian naivety. First, Shylock seems to be acutely conscious of the necessities of the deal he is going to strike with Antonio, which is quite similar to the way Aslan perceived of the deal with the Mullah. Both Jewish characters are portrayed to be quite cautious and well aware of the insincerity of their Christian/Muslim dealers. On mere religious bases, Shylock was portrayed to be overcautious when striking a deal with the Christians so much so that he declined a dinner invitation just because he cannot find a religious motive to accept it. Shylock, moreover, insinuated that Antonio's ships at sea cannot guarantee that he can get his money back due to the fact that "ships are but boards" and "sailors but men," and that there might be various inconveniences, which can prevent him from getting his money, such as "water-thieves" and "land-thieves". Second, Shylock was meant to appear capable of reasoning with the other Christian characters by quoting their as well as his religious texts. Eventually, the pound-of-flesh deal marked the culmination of the long reasoning process that took place between Antonio and Bassanio, from one hand, and Shylock on the other.

The desired consequences of this encounter were dictated by a swift process that Shakespeare employed in his play: after an attempt to convince the reader of Antonio's piety and his reproach to usury; it was undemanding for Shakespeare to build up on that to create the distinctive features of the antagonist. The Jewish Villain and the Naïve Christian dichotomy that the author devised partly contributed in capturing the imagination of the reading public; and therefore, deprived them from understanding the causes underlying Shylock's actions and reactions: when Shylock was busy striking a deal with Antonio and Bassanio, Shakespeare was basically trying to contain the Jewish villainy within an empathetic plot to the end of the play. Indeed, Aslan, Shylock and Barabbas are portrayed to be cautious characters with great reasoning abilities and elocution, then all these abilities are

dismantled by a brisk trick that would render all their rationalities null and void in the presence of the Other's wisdom. In fact, it was the clause that Aslan agreed to include in the contract that made him lose his property. In like manner, it was Shylock's insistence on the pound-of-flesh deal that made his life and wealth at risk. This process of categorization and containment, though created Shakespeare's pitiful antagonist, left so many questions unanswered, especially related to the ideological motives that underlie Shylock's behavior toward the Christian as well as the Jewish characters.

In fact, neither William Shakespeare's work *The Merchant of Venice*, nor Christopher Marlowe's classic *The Jew of Malta* could well depart from this quasi-apologetic literary tradition, which condemns a person on the basis of their religious affiliation. Shylock, the most infamous character in the play, though hated and scorned for being unable to lend money without profit to any Christian character in the play, a little is said about why three out of the four Jewish characters in the play have adopted usury as a profession. Barabbas, the most hated character in Marlowe's play, floods the whole narrative with biblical scriptures taken straight from the *Torah*, yet literary critics, such as Arthur Humphreys, Derek Cohen and Lisa Lampert, barely establish strong links between those texts and his profession as a merchant, or his relationship with his daughter, which is not different from Shylock's relationship with Jessica. Moreover, despite Shakespeare's several allusions to the *Hebrew Bible*, the narrative fails to account for why taking revenge was more favorable in Shylock's eyes than getting back his money twice as much, and that losing all his wealth is far better than converting to Christianity. All these questions would be best approached if one could coherently connect the dots between the biblical tradition of Judaism and the main Jewish characters in *The Merchant of Venice* and *The Jew of Malta*.

2. The Jew as a Sign: Stereotypical Jew

Jewish Studies scholarship on the origins of anti-Semitism distinguish between two schools of thought: the *Substantialist* and *Functionalist* models of interpretation. The first school postulates that anti-Semitism is the natural result of "the distinctive nature of the Jews or the Jewish religion" (in Hayes, 1999, p. 261). The functionalists, however, push forward the view that anti-Semitism is spurred by political and social conflicts. When contemplated for the first time, the two models seem to be disparate, yet a closer look at their bearings would prove otherwise. In effect, both models of interpretation hold Jews accountable for all the mishaps and calamities that happened to them throughout history.

Peter Schäfer, examines both tendencies in an illuminating book to eventually forge a new model capable of combining the bearings of both schools of thought into a less biased and less accusative approach. The holistic nature of Schäfer's approach is believed to be quite adequate to inform the main task of this section. In addition, his model of interpretation differentiates patently between anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism, as well as tracks the historical development of both terms. His model of interpretation is essentially hinged on Gavin I. Langmuir's perception of hostility against the Jews from a psychological and sociological standpoint. Langmuir's theory conceptualizes the long history of hostility against the Jews in three main assertions: Realistic Hostility, Xenophobia, and Chimeria.

The first assertion, he labelled *Realistic Hostility*, occurs when an outgroup, Jews in this case, emerges as a potential rival and competitor over scarcity of resources, namely; money, political power, military structure or social status. This form of hostility was exercised by the Greeks, Romans and Persians against the Jews for many years. During that time, the Jews were merely loathed and despised for a "real Jewish characteristic" and "their insistence on maintaining their Judaic identity as separate people" (in Schäfer, 1998, p. 201). Jewish resistance to a complete social assimilation and their yearning for separatism caused hatred against them inside their respective societies. The Greek grammarian and anti-Semitic leader, Apion, once inquired about the Jewish attitude to live separately from the societies where they expect to be treated equally: "If the Jews wish to become Alexandrian citizens, why don't

they worship the Alexandrian gods?” (ibid. p. 204). Perceived from a social perspective, Apion’s statement reveals the Jewish uncompromising attitude toward their god, and the invincible shaping power Judaism exercises over them. However, these feelings could have never amounted to menace, for the Greco-Roman-Persian societies had developed their own identities apart from anything Jewish. Therefore, Jews existed without exercising any remarkable influence on their social life, and thus became an easy target for hatred and ridicule.

When the existence of Jews becomes threatening to their societies, hostile assertions shift from *Realistic Hostility* to *Xenophobia*. The conundrum arises as the despicable conduct of a fraction of an outgroup is attributed to the whole group and all its members. The imputation that all Jews are usurers, Christ-Killers, or well-poisoners stands true only with reference to the Jews who committed these practices in their societies, but it cannot be overgeneralized to include whoever descends from a Jewish ancestral line. This form of hostility is conspicuously expressed on different occasions in Shakespeare’s as well as Marlowe’s play. However, no character perhaps best expresses the Jews wretched design better than Shylock when he addresses Antonio:

Signior Antonio, many a time and oft
In the Rialto you have rated me
About my moneys and my usances;
Still have I borne it with a patient shrug,
For suff’rance is the badge of all our tribe;
You call me misbeliever, cut-throat dog,
And spit upon my Jewish gaberdine,
And all for use of that which is mine own... (Shakespeare, 2011, lines 100-105).

Though every Christian character in the play entertains the commonsensical belief that Shylock could not have any hand in the wrongdoings that his “tribe” is allegedly accused to have committed, the fact that the Christian society is being threatened by the Jewish practice of usury, spawned fierce xenophobic reactions against all Jews of all times.

Given that, it would be unwise to overlook Antonio’s abominable deeds toward Shylock, especially that the latter had nothing to do with the historical development of Christendom and its overdue conflicts with Judaism, nor did he force his “countrymen” to borrow money with interest. As a matter of fact, Antonio is a mere representative of a culture whose fears and sense of danger from Jewish existence grew day by day. Captured by folklore tales and religious texts stigmatizing and condemning Jews, the whole society became alert to a potential threat that might wipe out all Christians. Though a great part of the Christian obsession with the Jewish potential threat can be diagnosed as a form of ideological captivity, we conjecture that Jews, following Shylock’s example, have played a crucial part in the construction of this discourse through their tendency to separatism and resistance to assimilation as previously expressed in Shylock’s phrase “all our tribe”.

The moment ideology becomes a leading agent in ethnic conflicts, anachronism turns out to be one of its effective means. Misplacing people, things or signifying objects related to them occurs via an unreliable process, oftentimes intentionally biased, supported by ill-understood threats, the literary process results in a plot hardly ever consistent with the historical milieu producing it. Historical evidence arguably substantiates the claim that all Jews were expelled from England in 1291, by Edward I., and they had never been able to return until the year 1656 (Philipson, 1911, p. 22). Having taken into account the year on which Marlowe penned his play, which is believed to have been accomplished sometime during or after 1588, it follows that the play was written during the time when there were absolutely no Jews, or scarcely a few of them to be considered as representatives of Judaism or Jewry. One may argue that Marlowe was actually referring to the Jew of Malta not England. In this case, the anachronism becomes even crystal clear, for Jews were forcibly expelled from Spain since

1492 and never came back until 1728. As a result, the history of expulsion in Europe would nullify any chances of finding accurate representative facts about Jews neither in Marlowe's play nor Shakespeare's reproduction.

The second form of anachronism can be accounted for as a mere result of lacking knowledge about Judaism and Jewish life from the inside. The best authority that could be referred to in this matter, and who tackled anachronism from a religious perspective, is the work of Rabbi Philipson. He believes that all the literary tricks that Marlowe and Shakespeare devised in order to force their Jewish antagonists to act in a particular way were overall, except a few, un-Jewish: "There are a few instances wherein the dramatist[s] strike a true note in Jewish life and Jewish character, a very few, [...]" (ibid. p. 23). Thus, neither Barabbas nor Shylock, according to Philipson, were responding to occurrences in accord with the teachings of Judaism. We can clearly observe this when Barabbas is encountered with the plight of losing all his wealth and possessions to Ferneze. He resolutely involves his daughter Abigail, in a well-contrived plot of entering the Christian covenant as a go-between, and who ends up poisoning all the nuns. Such design, appears to Philipson, simply as non-Jewish for the fact that family in Jewish life is held dear and pure to be recklessly tarnished with such counsel as the play attempts to convey.

This analysis brings us back to Langmuir's third assertion, *Chimeria*, which is based on propositions that have never been observed or tested empirically. It aligns in many ways with the cannibalistic conspiracies that were formed against the Jews. A salient example of ritual cannibalism states that Jews observed the custom of sacrificing a Christian boy in their synagogues and shared his heart at Passover. Despite the absence of any historical evidence that could back up a claim of this kind, we can safely have a basic understanding of how far human imagination can go when faced with an eminent threat. "It is precisely the feeling of being threatened by the Jews," Schäfer concludes "which informs many, if not most of, anti-Jewish statements into antiquity" (1998, p. 202). Hence, the amalgamation of fear with literary creation greatly qualifies this research to a psychoanalytic interpretation.

The second un-Jewish characteristic that might have been frequently reproduced by the dramatists of Elizabethan era is the Jew as a usurer. So, instead of following the same thread of rebuttal when defending Barabbas' actions, Philipson's view of the Jew as a usurer rather generates an apologetic discourse. He does not seem to be able to refute the historical authenticity of the fact that Jews have truly adopted this form of money-lending as a profession. Nor could he abnegate the responsibility of demonstrating that usury was un-Jewish, not due to anachronism, but rather because it flagrantly violates the teachings of the *Torah*. Yet, he apologetically approaches the matter by claiming that Jews are not to be blamed for taking up this job, because all historical facts prove that they were forced to it; as it was the only type of occupation they were allowed to practice. Moreover, Philipson attempts to water down the gravity of violating the basic Jewish laws as clearly stated in the first five books, *Pentateuch*, of the twenty-four books of the *Tanakh*, by poorly justifying the transgression since it was a common practice, even among Christians, during those "lawless, troubled times" (Philipson, 1911, p. 27)

With this we come full circle, whether Barabbas' plot with his daughter to poison the whole covenant in revenge was un-Jewish, or whether the excessive practice of usury by Jews was not allowed by the *Torah*, we believe, as this paper would demonstrate and prove later, that whatever seemed to be un-Jewish to Philipson, is likely to have a solid background in the teachings of Judaism. Moreover, no matter how a Jew's view of the world and the Other seems to be devoid of any religious interpretation or independent from any Judaic teachings, theories on captivity of texts may have a lot to reveal in this regard.

3. The Jew as a Captive: Ideological Captivity

It would have been much easier to fathom the effect of religion on the antagonists had Shakespeare and Marlowe not misled the reader to thinking that Shylock and Barabbas led a secular (non-religious) life. Shakespeare refers to this less conspicuously, because his portrayal of Shylock forces the reader to feel that the antagonist acts on hatred-and-revenge basis, and that his actions hardly have anything to do with being a devout Jew. Perhaps, the way Shylock's daughter presents herself to the Christian characters in the play, as different from her father, can best demonstrate that the latter was not invoking religion when he had to respond to his Christian enemies: "But though I am a daughter to his blood, I am not to his manners" (Shakespeare, 2011, 2. 3. 15-20). The fact that Jessica departed from her father's manners disproves, at least in the mind of the misled reader, the significance and relevance of Judaism in Shylock's family, especially when it comes to his daughter's education and upbringing. However, Marlowe's prologue is unequivocal in this regard, for the narrator of the prologue tries hard at the beginning of the play to convince the reader that Barabbas is a secular character, more precisely a Machiavellian *par excellence*: "I count Religion but a childish Toy, And hold there is no sinne but Ignorance." (Marlowe, 1910, line 15).

The history of Jewish captivity as documented in the *Hebrew Bible* and *Rabbinic literature* hardly leaves a shred of doubt about how influential religion can be in shaping, molding and informing Shylock's and Barabbas' actions and reactions. Unfortunately, the disillusionment occurs when the reader fails to assemble all the religious texts and allusions in the plays, and render them incapable of transmitting a unified message. Instead, he quotes them in a scattered manner, which ill-affords connecting the various textual contexts in one unified meaningful whole.

The links between Judaism and the actions of Jews are so tight to be easily separated, and this fact remains forever true. A recent survey, conducted in 2015 by the Anti-Defamation League on twelve European Countries, investigating the top five reasons why people harbor anti-Semitic feelings. The rubrics under consideration in the survey align so much with the stereotypes that the Jews had to endure and resist during the Elizabethan era, namely; their admiration of whatever is Jew, excelling in the world of trade and business, as well as the incessant attempts to dramatize the history of their nation to appear as victims of the Other's cruelty;

- Jews are more loyal to Israel than the country where they live.
- Jews have too much power in the business world.
- Jews still talk too much about what happened to them in the Holocaust.
- Jews don't care about what happened to anyone but their own kind.
- Jews think they are better than other people (Paikin, 2019, 7:39)

These results are unsurprisingly prejudicial stereotypes, yet the persistence of the conception of Jews as the chosen nation who endured persecution throughout history to finally become a leading power in the world of business is deeply embedded in a constant agent, which keeps the equation ever valid even if all its reactants had been subject to change and alteration. The only agent that could possibly possess this quality is religion (i. e. Judaism) in its textual form. It is furthermore self-evident to question the role religion plays in the life of Jews, especially when we learn about the names given to the rescue operations masterminded by the national intelligence agency of Israel, the Mossad, in the twentieth century, to covertly evacuate Ethiopian Jews from Sudan: Operation Moses, known also as Modern Exodus (1948) and Operation Solomon (1991). Both of these operations were named after two great biblical characters. Consequently, this section will take the burden of bridging the gap between the religious texts uttered by the antagonists and the long historical background of Jews as captives.

The theo-historical dimension, which largely informs the claims of this section, perceives the Jew as someone who identifies oneself with the cultural community whose traditional religion is Judaism and who traces their ancestry to the ancient Hebrew people of Israel, all the way back to Abraham (circa 3772 BCE). However, this remains true until July 5th, 1950, when Israel's unicameral national legislature, Knesset, passed the Law of Return. Since then, a Jew has been perceived as someone with either a Jewish mother or has converted to Judaism. In this research, the two definitions should not be a luxury, for they bear quite illuminating facts about the way Barabbas and Shylock perceive themselves in contrast with the world of the Gentiles they happened to live in. When Barabbas commissioned Abigail as a go-between in the Christian covenant, he prayed to God earnestly to protect his daughter. This was his prayer:

Oh thou that with a fiery pillar led'st
The sonnes of *Israel* through the dismall shades,
Light Abrahams off-spring; and direct the hand
Of Abigall this night; or let the day
Turne to eternal darkenesse after this... (Marlowe, 1910, line 650).

This solemnly invoked prayer, performed in a monologue mode, reveals a sophisticated network of relations that Barabbas seems to be perfectly aware of. He is also acutely attentive to the contextual application of such invocations. Firstly, he identifies himself as well as his daughter with their Hebrew origins as the off-springs of Abraham. In so doing, recalling history, for Barabbas, is not an end on itself; it is however, a means to a greater and holier purpose. He was merely fulfilling God's commandment to the children of Israel to remember the history of their forefathers: "Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee" (KJV, Deuteronomy 32:7). Encapsulating the collective memory in a religious text endows historical occurrences with an invincible power to persist all forms of distortion or destruction. It can even render its advocates remarkably resistant to change and, as Malek Bennabi puts it, might turn the Jew to a stable thing that age shall not wither, for it can never change (2013, p. 71). Secondly, Barabbas' allusion to *Israel*, otherwise known as Jacob, is not an impulsive reaction of pride and haughtiness to the wrong-doings of his Christian countrymen against him. Indeed, it is a history of redemption and freedom from the potential yoke of the Edomites (the descendants of his brother Esau). The invocation of Jacob's name before Abraham's concurs our hypothesis that Shylock and Barabbas are not responding to events out of innocently internalized cultural elements devoid of any ideological commitments. Their discourses are crammed with a condensed form of ideological elements based on a plethora of scriptural anthologies, of which the *Old Testament* is just one source.

Barabbas, for instance, doesn't even seem to hold all Jews on an equal footing. In spite of his belief that all Jews descend from Abraham, he invokes the memory of the third Hebrew progenitor with whom God made a covenant. By identifying himself as well as his daughter Abigail with *Israel*, he is definitely trying to perpetuate the biblical preference of the Children of *Israel* over all the descendants of Abraham, especially the off-springs of his only brother Esau. The textual tradition conveyed by Barabbas via his careful selection of the name *Israel*, instead of Jacob, uncovers his knowledge of how the Children of *Israel* have been chosen, over all Abraham's off-springs, to receive the blessings of God as well as how *Israel*'s theomachy with the angel of God endowed him and his descendants with godly supremacy over all the subsequent nations:

So God give thee of the dew of heaven, and of the fat places of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine. Let peoples serve thee, and nations bow down to thee. Be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee.

Cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be every one that blesseth thee. (KJV, Genesis 27: 28-29)

And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was strained, as he wrestled with him. And he said: 'Let me go, for the day breaketh. ' And he said: 'I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. 'And he said unto him: 'What is thy name?' And he said: 'Jacob. 'And he said: 'Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel; for thou hast striven with God and with men, and hast prevailed. ' (KJV, Genesis 32:25-29)

As a case in point, Shylock's often-quoted moving speech poses a new conundrum. When Shylock tries to reason with Salarino, he gives the reader the impression that he, as a representative of Jews, truly believes that Jews and Christians are identical in all aspects: "If you prick us, do we not bleed? [...] And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge? If we are like you in the rest, we resemble you in that" (Shakespeare, 2011, line 35). However, reading this sympathetic speech against all other utterances reveals that Shylock's play upon words is beyond extraordinary. In addition to Shylock's elocution, the prevailing misunderstanding syndrome that is plaguing the minds of the Christian characters in the play contributed greatly in intensifying the sympathy of Shylock's speech as well as unconsciously luring the listener to believing that Shylock doesn't consider himself as different from his Christian countrymen. It is true that a Jew resembles exactly any other human ever existed, yet according to Shylock, this resemblance can never amount to the purity of Jewish blood. For him, a Christian is not but a pound of flesh and his blood is unworthy of spilling, even for feeding his revenge. Shylock knows very well that what makes a Jew is his blood, and what distinguishes an Edomite from an Israelite is again blood. Thus, when he decided to bewitch the Christian mind with a sympathetic discourse, he built a mental image in which pricking is the common accident that can occur to anyone, and the result of that accident is shared by all humans. However, whether a Jew's blood is identical to the Christian's or not, this is actually what Shylock's nimble mind could cunningly conceal.

Understanding the *Hebrew Bible*, at least the texts informing Shylock's and Barabbas' worldview provides one of the defining contexts for comprehending the processes by which a religious text could turn into an ideological force as well as equip us with the necessary tools to explain the ideological practices of these two ideologues. In order to do so, we need first to acknowledge that despite the questionable authenticity of the biblical text, its impact on Jews and Jewry should not pass unnoticed. Moreover, we need to understand that the *Old Testament* is not only a set of laws and commandments; it is also an anthology comprising history, poetry, philosophy of the highest order (Durant, 1954, p. 339). Indeed, it is a collection of texts replete with the memory, culture and spirit of a people/race, whose discourse can safely be analyzed by employing the conceptual fruits of theories on captivity, identity and ideology.

The worst thing that can be done with any text is uprooting it from its original context. Quoting a religious text cannot always be authentically right, as it may convey different meanings from the original situational context that inspired the verse being quoted. The best who can sum up this hermeneutical mode are Foucault's words: "Commentary must say for the first time what had nonetheless already been said ... it allows us to say something other than the text itself, but on condition that it is this text itself which is said, and in a sense completed" (in Levinson, 2016, p. 83). Once the verse is quoted, it slips from the hands of its author and can therefore be used or misused in a variety of contexts (ibid. p. 83). I believe that Shakespeare and Marlowe fell into the trap of misusing the biblical texts they have put in the mouths of their antagonists. A plausible reason for that is probably due to the lack of any real

Jewish life during those times. Therefore, both playwrights were merely reproducing stereotypes imported to them by means of tendentious narratives.

The discourse of both narratives migrates from one situational context to another, depending on which biblical text the Jewish characters are quoting. The variety of the discourse being produced is also determined by the intensity of the encounter between the self and the other. The ideological boundaries created by the Jews demarcate the borders that preserve their tendency to separatism, and thus reinforce their belief in the special divine providence to the “Children of God”. There is no exaggeration in using the previous phrase to refer to the Children of *Israel*, for the book of Exodus explicitly dubs them so: “And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh: Thus saith the LORD: Israel is My son, My first-born. And I have said unto thee: Let My son go, that he may serve Me; and thou hast refused to let him go” (4: 22-23). In contrast to this nomenclature, we find Barabbas, for the first time in the play, signifying Christians in a manner that showcases his knowledge of the deep meanings embedded in the verse from the book of Exodus: “[...] these swine-eating Christians, unchosen nation, never circumcised” (Marlowe, 1910, line 770). This is, to borrow Marry Louis Pratt’s term, indicative of what happens in the vicinities of a “Contact Zone”, where the two disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination” (in Levinson, 2016, p. 76).

Another key characteristic of captivity narratives is their emphasis on the victimization of the self and the inhumanity of the Other. In this case, the victim relies upon a miscellaneous archive of literature to prove one’s case, as he attempts to build an identity on the basis of that cultural struggle. He also tries to create a supportive community, which plays a powerful role in preserving the spirit of separatism. To be a Jew, for Shakespeare, you ought to be a money-lender, following the example of Shylock. This portrayal could have been considered as a stereotype, had we been unable to establish any links between the practice of usury and the teachings of the biblical literature. It’s arguably true that the *Torah* denounces money-lending with interest, but it asserts the importance of Jews being money-lenders instead of borrowers: “Thou shalt lend unto many nations, but thou shalt not borrow” (KJV, Genesis 32:25-29). This text doesn’t only victimize the Jew, whose identity is perceived as superior to all other nations, it also aligns with the historical fact that the Jews were denied all types of jobs. So, money-lending, for them, functions as an instrument to rebel against the inhumane cultural milieu they occupy. Meanwhile, it is a chance for them to abide by the rules revealed to them by their heavenly Father. The status of the Jew, as the only Child of God, disqualifies him from any potential risks of feeling inferior to a non-Jew. This is essentially true when we consider the biblical text that urges Jews to offer a helping hand to another Jew in need to prevent him from seeking help from the Gentiles:

If there be among you a needy man, one of thy brethren, within any of thy gates, in thy land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor shut thy hand from thy needy brother; but thou shalt surely open thy hand unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need in that which he wanteth. Beware that there be not a base thought in thy heart, saying: 'The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand'; and thine eye be evil against thy needy brother, and thou give him nought; and he cry unto the LORD against thee, and it be sin in thee. Thou shalt surely give him, and thy heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him; because that for this thing the LORD thy God will bless thee in all thy work, and in all that thou puttest thy hand unto. For the poor shall never cease out of the land; therefore I command thee, saying: 'Thou shalt surely open thy hand unto thy poor and needy brother, in thy land' (KJV, Deuteronomy 15:7-11).

Within these biblical scriptures lies a number of commandments, whose purpose and wide-ranging goal, transcends the simplistic intentions of securing a living and sustaining an opulent material life. The aim is to build a well-heelled network of social relationships between the members of the Jewish community/nation so that the need for a non-Jew/Gentile would not necessarily arise. Furthermore, the metamorphosis of these social relations occurs when God becomes an active agent in the social structure of the relations between his people. This agency entrenches the social structure as it ensures the abundance and continuity of the material rewards by means of divine interference.

To conclude, it would be worthwhile to note that the portrayal of the Jew as a materialist is deep-rooted in the hermeneutic mode employed to comprehend the commandments of the biblical text. The mode of interpretation, utilized by the Jew, may prove to be erroneous and unfounded, nevertheless it still mirrors several ideological and cultural aspects that rest at the core of the Jew's practices. According to Durant, for instance, the first version of Judaism had not developed any idea of the hereafter. Thus, Jews considered worldly rewards as a sign of God's satisfaction with his children. We can trace back the origin of this belief to Abraham, who received a promise from God to endow his nation with prosperity as long as the sun shines and the moon wanes. Barabbas was acting accordingly when he was conversing with a merchant and another Jew:

Thus trowles our fortune in by land and Sea,
And thus are wee on euery side inrich'd:
These are the Blessings promis'd to the Lewes,
And herein was old Abrams happinesse:
What more may Heaven doe for earthly man
Then thus to power out plenty in their laps,
Ripping the bowels of the earth for them,
Making the Sea their seruent, and the winds
To driue their substance with successful blasts? (Marlowe, 1910, line 145).

For Barabbas, the God of the *Torah* bestowed upon the people of Abraham worldly prosperity, and that such design should be preserved for as long as the Jews existed. Living in poverty and dire circumstances are likely to be interpreted, from a Jewish perspective, as a violation of God's plan for his people.

4. The Jew as a Child: A Psychoanalytic Reading

In this paper, the attempt is ventured not to discredit Shakespeare's and Marlowe's perception of Jews more than to look at some of the speech uttered by the Jewish antagonists from a religious perspective. Even though both playwrights were reflecting a segregating culture by reproducing stereotypes about Jews, there is a chance to approach their utterances with scientific scrutiny and decipher the ideological roots underlying them. The previous section established close connections between the biblical text (*Torah*) and the Jew's world-view of the Other. However, the current section will try to probe into the Jew's perception of himself based on the *Old Testament*. In this vein, we will be mostly interested in the Jew as a "Child". Thus, the theoretical framework most convenient for this type of investigation should take into account the bi-polar nature of the theme in question: religion and psychology. Therefore, we shall remain indebted to Sigmund Freud who sought to solve unexplained problems of racial psychology by implementing psychoanalysis in his illuminating books *Totem and Taboo*, and *Moses and Monotheism*. His findings will essentially inform the working hypothesis of this research.

There are two main reasons that rest at the heart of our treatment of the Jew as a child. First, the persistence of the nomenclature "children", with the continuous shift of the object of the prepositional phrase from Abraham and Israel to God. To put it simply, throughout history, Jews signified and differentiated their tribe from all other tribes and races by means

of three phrases: Children of Abraham, Children of Israel, and Children of God. If we were to borrow Freud's term, the shift would repeatedly affect the Totem not its subjects. Second, the representation of the Jew as a father, whose children are briskly involved in the main plot of the plays, invites us to examine the relationship between the father and child and its psychological repercussions on the Child/God dichotomy.

In an article examining all the *Old Testament* texts in which God is referred to as the father of the nation of Israel, Goran Medved's findings can be summarized in two significant ideas: God's relationship with the nation of Israel is always that of fatherly procreation, caretaking and unconditional love. Even at times of punishment, God disciplines his people in the same way a man disciplines his sons (KJV, Deuteronomy 8:5). However, the reaction of God's sons to that love was quite opposite to what was expected from them. They have dealt treacherously with their father like a woman departs from her husband (KJV, Jeremiah 3:20). According to Medved's analysis, we may conjecture that his findings emphasize the rebellious manners of the child, in spite of the affectionate ways of the Totem (God) toward its worshippers.

Now, let us first have a good understanding of totemism as a system of thoughts and practices replacing religion in many cultural races like Australia, America, and Africa. Then, we are essentially required to grasp the organizational function that totemic beliefs and customs acquired over history. Only then, we can provide a solid ground to perceive the Child/God dichotomy in a broad crystal-clear totemic model. "A totem" as Freud quotes J. G. Frazer's definition, "is a class of material objects which a savage regards with superstitious respect, believing that there exists between him and every member of the class and altogether special relationship [...]" (1919, p. 88). According to Frazer, the totem has four main characteristics that should be clearly stated here: it is rarely an inanimate or artificial object; it has always to do with a class of animals or plants, and never with objects, the thing that may well characterize fetishism; a totem is revered and worshipped for its protective powers toward the members of the clan or tribe believing in it; lastly, the link between the totem and the members of the tribe is virtually that of origin. In other words, the tribe's members, whether consciously or unconsciously, hold the belief that they have originated from that animal or plant.

As far as this research is concerned, the origins of the Jewish totemic epoch were all recorded in the book of Genesis (32: 22-32). It is the time when Jacob was journeying back to Canaan and he was interrupted by the angel of God, whom he had to wrestle with until daybreak. The brawl ended with Jacob emerging victorious as well as acquiring a new name that would signify the extraordinary powers he possessed: "*Israel*". The name in Hebrew is made up of two parts, "*Yisra*" and "*el*", meaning "the one who prevails/fights with God." In spite of Shylock's invocation of Abraham, as we have explained in the previous section, which was mentioned after Jacob's name, we are not inclined to trace back the historical beginnings of Jewish totemic epoch to Abraham, for the simple reason that the latter is a mere indicator of the inception of Jewishness and does not provide any special characteristics that can be aligned with the psychoanalytic investigation of primitive totemic cultures. The children of *Israel*, however, were longing for a totem guardian capable of protecting them from all evil. The various contrasting interpretations put forward in *Rabbinic Literature* to account for why Jacob was surnamed *Israel*, reveal the concealed intentions of deliberate psychological workings attempting to transform the historical character Jacob into a mythological figure capable of fulfilling the two main articles of the totemic religion outlined by S. Reinach in his seminal book *Code du Totémisme*: "the totem animal protects and warns the members of the tribe," and "The members of a totem tribe often believe that they are connected with the totem by the bond of common origin" (in Freud, 1919, p. 87). The application of this catechism to the rabbinic interpretive mode, regarding Jacob's new acquired nomenclature, may stand as a plausible evidence that the Judaic Totem was a

deliberate creation of a common origin and that the mythological narrative mode that constructed the totem is the same mode capturing Shylock's and Barabbas' imagination.

Based on the fact that the angel who wrestled with Jacob concealed his name and identity from Jacob, different interpretations emerged as to what the name *Israel* means. Some rabbis conjectured that Jacob defeated a guardian angel, who was sent to destroy Jacob and protect his brother Esau. This interpretation is quite biased as it aims at belittling the status of Jacob in comparison to his brother, as well as insinuating that Jacob's fight with the angel was not right and that he was a transgressor. It is clearly obvious that this prejudicial interpretation satisfies the psychological urges of Esau's descendants. Another interpretation postulates that the theomachy was between Jacob and God himself, not an angel. This is clearly an overexaggerated statement, whose function in the biblical dialogue most probably serves power/hegemony relationships. It is a metaphoric affirmation of Abraham's prophecy that Esau's descendants are destined to serve the Children of Israel through Esau's birthright, which he sold to his brother, and also by means of the blessings that Jacob received from Abraham before his death. Accordingly, the nomenclature "Israel" acquired several significations; to name a few, "the one who rules with God", "the one who has power over God", "the one who prevails over God", and "the one who can struggle with God." Therefore, it becomes less surprising to find that Shylock and Barabbas assume the name of their Totem and in their discourse, they incessantly affiliate themselves as well as their family members and Jewish countrymen with him "Israel" instead of Abraham or Esau. Our assumption of this perception of the self in contrast with the Other is supported by Freud's definition of the "tribal totem", which is according to him "the object of veneration of a group of men and women who take their name from the totem and consider themselves consanguineous offspring of a common ancestor, and who are firmly associated with each other through common obligations towards each other as well as by the belief of their totem" (ibid. p. 88).

The second part of this discussion deals with the transformation of totemism from a religious system of thought and practices into a social organizational machinery. To this presentation of totemism, Freudian analysis reveals that the latter is expressed through a number of commandments and restrictions to be followed and never to be violated: "taboo". The members of a particular clan or tribe are bound by close relationships of brotherhood and sisterhood; and thus, if harm inflicts one member of a tribe, the other members must sacrifice their lives in order to terminate the adversity. In case of murder, the tribe of the slain person must ask for expiation for the blood that has been shed. Indeed, "the ties of the totem," as Freud concluded, "are stronger than our ideas of family ties, with which they do not altogether coincide, since the transfer of the totem takes place as a rule through maternal inheritance, paternal inheritance possibly not counting at all in the beginning" (ibid. p. 89-90). In light of these Freudian findings, we can easily account for Shylock's great interest in money-lending (usury), and Barabbas' passion for trade. Their tendencies are meant to abide by the commandments of the totemic religion and lend a helping hand to whomever belongs to that totemic clan. Furthermore, this analysis is capable of explaining Shylock's practice of usury, even though the biblical text forbids it. This demonstrates that Shylock's lifestyle, actions and reaction to circumstances are subject to a totemic religion, based on religious commandments as long as they meet the individual's needs and protects the well-being of the totemic society. Once the biblical text fails to address the tribe's concerns and its members become vulnerable, totemic society declares those religious regulations/orders null and void. As a result, totemic culture takes over religion and its societal regulations become the standard.

The history of Jews is a long history of captivity. In Freudian terms, the story of Jews is a story of castration. The rebellious reaction of the Jew against potential threats that may wipe out its race should never be described as abominable. Jewish history is replete with stories of frustrating childhood. Albert Elberg-Schwartz has suggested that throughout history "Jewish bodies" have been inadequately portrayed. Jewish males were pictured as weak feminine men with small penises, overwhelmingly interested in feminine issues. Moreover, they were

represented as grotesque, hairy, smelly women and too much obsessed with flesh and bodily rituals, such as circumcision (Eliza Slavet, 2008, p. 102). In the beginning, there was the insecure Jew, who was trapped in the middle of xenophobic civilizations: Greeks, Romans and Persians. The encounter between Jews and these civilizations spawned what Freud labelled “the neuroses of childhood.” In this case, the Jew as a child develops feelings of intimidation and fear from a particular threat. This fear of castration spawns a psychic reaction to the threat by displacing the object of fear and replacing it with a totemic figure (the savior/protector). The central complex of neurosis is “Oedipus Complex”, in which the child represses the object of desire “the mother” as a result of the powerful domination of “the father”. This psychological mechanism creates ambivalent reactions from Shylock toward the other Gentile characters in the novel, and the best example of that is Shylock’s sympathetic speech. Ambivalent discourse is one of the main steps in the process of displacing the threats of the powerful father (Gentiles) into a mighty fatherly God, whose main purpose is to take care of his only children. We shall be able to complete our explanation that the Jew, having suffered from castration attempts as a child, he managed to create a stronger father that could render his life in peace and free from any eminent threats to his existence. Since the choice fell historically on Jacob, it could not have lasted forever, for a Jew knows very well that any human made of flesh and blood cannot achieve immortality. This definitely leaves the Jew a captive to insecurity. Therefore, the Jewish child substituted the primal father (*Israel*) with a totem father (in heaven). In so doing, the psychological apparatus projected its neurotic fears on a totemic father, whose existence is independent of any human intervention.

5. Conclusion

Statements addressing a particular race or ethnic group in a derogatory fashion can safely be categorized as stereotypes. However, this is partly true only if the statement is successfully diagnosed as anachronism-free. In the absence of historical accuracy, the so-called stereotypes invite us to investigate their credibility by means of a wide range of literary theories and scientific methods. This research was fortunate enough to have been able to implement the invaluable findings of captivity studies and Freud’s theory on Totemism and Jewishness.

This research was developed with this hypothesis in mind: could it be possible that what literary scholars labelled “stereotypes about the Jews” in their treatment of Shakespeare’s and Marlowe’s plays, has actually nothing to do with stereotyping and that the discourse generated by the antagonists is quite revealing of a sophisticated network of ideological relations? With this in mind, we set off our investigation by assuming that both playwrights were merely reproducing stereotypes imported to England, especially that historical research argues that there could have been no Jewish communities living in England or Italy back then.

Having dissected the body of signs that are commonly attributed to the Jew in the two plays, we were able to state several reasons for why a Jew seems to be a notoriously appropriate target for stereotyping. This set of reasons is mostly based on the relationship of Jewry with the community members with whom they share a geographical space. It also depends on the Jewish mindset and readiness to be acculturated or assimilated in the community. Such undertakings are more easily imagined than done, due to the Jew’s invincible belief in the peculiarity of his race. Another reason that made acculturation impossible is the fact that Jewish beliefs are not individual experiences; instead, they are the spiritual and historical heritage of the Jewish collective memory, which is deeply embedded in a relatively long religious narrative, known as the *Torah*.

In a nutshell, the analysis of the antagonists’ discourse brought about the following findings: (1) All the plays’ Jewish characters, notably Shylock and Barabbas, were dealing with events from a conscious or unconscious deep knowledge of the biblical texts’ commandments. (2) All the aberrant behaviors committed by the antagonists could well be explained from a biblical perspective, should we be able to establish plausible links between the behavior in the real world and the religious teachings in the biblical text. (3) In totemic

terms, the Jew's perception of the world was subject to father/child relations. His repressed feelings of segregation and insecurity urged his psychological apparatus to create an image of a mighty father, who is capable of defending his people from all evil. The problem, however, emerged with the immortality of *Israel*, whom the Jews are quite certain of his death sooner or later. Eventually, the psychological complex of living in vulnerability pushed them to invent a conceptual God, whose existence is entirely independent of all human life. This God becomes the final version of the Jewish Totem and that will forever accompany their defining phrase "the children of God".

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